

Copyright, 1894, by Bacheller, Johnson & Bacheller. little village, on a cold day, watch the old preached the group. codgers and see where they congregate. That's what the stray cats do, or perhaps the codgers watch the cats. However that may be, it is safe to follow either, for both may be depended upon to find the open door where comfort is. They would probably lead you to the rear-end of the village store, the tobacco-stained drawing room where an old stove dispenses hospitality in an atmosphere like unto which, for genial disposition, there is

none on earth so unfailing. From November to May the old stove in the back of Chris. Rowston's store was, to its devotees at least, the most popular hostess in Simpkinsville. And, be it understood, her circle was composed of perple in good repute. Even the cats sleeping at her feet, if personally tramps, were well connected, being lineal descendants of known cats belonging to families in good standing. Many, indeed, were natives of the shop, and had come into this kingdom of comfort in a certain feline lying-in hospital, behind the rows of barrels that flank-

ed the stove on either side. It was the last day of December. The wind was raw and cold, and of a fitful mind, blowing in contrary gusts and throwing into the faces of people going in a'l directions various samples from the winter store house of the sky, now a threat, a

Promise or a dare, as to how the New Year should come in. "Blest if Do., ain't got snow on his coat. Rainin' when I come in," said one of two old men, who drew their seats back a little while the speaker pushed a chair forward with his boot.
"Reckon I got both froze and wet drops

on me twix this an' Meredith's," drawled the newcomer, depositing his saddle bags beside his chair, wiping the drops from his sleeves over the stove and spreading his thin palms for its grateful return of warm steam.

"Sleetin' out our way." remarked his neighbor, between pipe puffs. And then he "How's Meredith's wife coming on, doctor? Reckon she's purty bad off, ain't

The doctor was filling his pipe now, and he did not answer immediately. But presently he said, as he deliberately reached forward and seized the tongs and lifted a live coal to his pipe:
"Meredith's wife don't rightfully belong

in a doctor's care. She ain't to say sick. She's heartbroke, that's what she is, but of co'se that ain't a thing I can tell heror him, either.' This has been a mighty slow and tire-

some year in Simpkinsville," he added, in a moment, "an' I'm glad to see it drawin' to a close. It come in with snow an' sleet, an' troubles, an' seems like it's goin' out the same way-jest like the years have done three years past." "Jest look at that cat, what a dusty

color she's got between spots. Th'ain't a cat in Simpkinsville, hardly, thet don't show a trace o' Jim Meredith's maltee an' I jest nachelly despise it, 'cause that's one of the presents he brought out ther-"Maltee is a good enough color for a cat

ef it's kep' true," remarked old Pete Tay-"Plenty good enough of it's kep' true. but it's like gray paint; it'll mark up most anything it's mixed with, and cloud it.' "I recken Jim Meredith's maltee ain't the only thing o' his thet's cast a shade over Simpkinsville," said old Mr. Mc-Morigle, who sat opposite.

"That's so!" grunted the circle.

teler'ble fair days sense little May Mere-

dith dropped out of it, but the sun ain't

never shone on it quite the same-to my

"Wonder where she is?" said McMonigle.

"My opinion is she's dead, an' that her

mother knows it. I wouldn't be surprised ef the devil that enticed her away has

killed her. One't a feller like that gits a

her there's a dozen ways of gittin' shet of

"Yes, a hundred of 'em. It's done every day, I don't doubt."

East wind'll make her splt any day-seems

as he leaned forward and began poking the

fire, "she hates a east wind, but she likes

me. Don't you, old girl? See her grow red

in the face while I chuck her under the

"Look out you don't chuck out a coal of

fire on kitty with your feelin'," said old

"She does blush in the face, don't she

"That stove is a well-behaved old lady,

wind's from the right quarter-an' I

reg'larly gits religion, an' shouts whenever

wen't have her spoke of with disrespect,'

"Ef she could tell all she's heard, sittin'

there summer an' winter, I reckon it'd make a book-an' a interestin' one, too.

There's been cats and mice born in her all

semmer an' birds hatched; an' Rowton

tells me he's got a dominicker hen thet's reg'larly watched for the fires to go out

last two seasons so she can lay in her. An' din't you never hear about Phil Toland

hidin' a whisky bottle in her one day last summer and smashin' a whole sittin' o'

eggs? The hen she squawked out at him, an' all but skeered him to death. He

thought he had a 'tackt o' the tremens, shore—an' of a adult variety."

An' see her wink urder her isinglass spec-

man Taylor, and then he added:

tacles when she's flirted with."

said the doctor.

See that stove how she spits smoke.

"Yas," said McMonigle, chuckling softly

girl into a crowded city and gits tired of

"Hello, Brother Squires!" he called out If you would find the warmest spot in a now, to a tall, clerical old man who ap-

"Hello! What you doin' in a sto'e like this, I like to know? Th'ain't no Bibles, nor trac's for sale here, an' your folks don't eat molasses and bacon same ez us sinners, do you?"

"Well, my friends," replied the parson, smiling broadly as he advanced, "since you good people don't supply us with locusts and wild honey, we are reduced to the necessity of eatin' plain bread an' meatbut you see I live up to the Baptist standard, as far as I can. I wear the leathern girdle about my loins."

He pointed to the long, soft leather whip which, for safe keeping, he had tied loosely about his waist.

"Room for one more?" he added, as declining the only vacant chair he seated himself upon a soap box, extended his long legs and raised his boots upon the ledge of the stove. "I declare, Brother Squires, the patches

on them boots are better'n a contribution said McMonigle, laughing, as he thrust his hand down into his pocket. "Reckon it'll take a half dollar to cover this one." he added, as he playfully balanced a bright coin over the topmost patch

on the pastor's toe.
"Step your laughin' now, parson. Don't shake it off! Come up, boys! Who'll cover the next patch? Ef my 'rithmetic is right there's jest about a patch apiece for cover-not includin' the half soles. I know



Sat on the Flo' by Her Bed. parson wouldn't have money set above his

"No, certainly not, an' if anybody'd place it there, of co'se I'd remove it immediate ly," the parson answered with ready wit. And then he added more seriously:

"I have passed my hat around to collect my salary once in a while, but I never expected to hand around my old shoes—

and really, my friends, I don't know as I

Still, he did not draw them in, and the three old men grew so hilarious over the fun of covering the parson's patches with ever-slipping coins that a crowd was soon collected, the result being the pocket-ing of the entire handful of small coins by Rowton, with the generous assurance that it should be good for the best pair of boots in his store, to be fitted at the astor's convenience. It was after this mirth had all subsided

and the codgers rad settled down into their accustomed quiet that the parson remark-

ed, with some show of hesitation:
"My brothers, when I was coming toward you awhile ago I heard two names. They are names that I hear now and then among my people-names of two persons I have never met-persons who passed out of your community some time before I was stationed among you. One of them, I know, has a sad history. The details of the story I have never heard, but it is in the air. Scarcely a village in all our dear the start, and she treated him mighty

"That's so!" grunted the circle.
"That's so—shore ez you're bo n," echoed skies, a little cloud upon them—a cloud Pete. "Simpkinsville has turned out some which to its people seems always to re-

two year befo' you come.
"Well, sir, when it was known that May

fetched 'em. "Well, sir, that was the purtiest party I ever see in my life. Our Simpkinsville pat-tern for young girls is a toler'ble neat one, ef I do say it, ez shouldn't, bein' kin to forty-'leven of 'em. We ain't got no, to say, ugly girls in town-never had many, though some has plained down consider'ble

ty a show o' beauty ez any rose arbor could turn out on a spring day.
"Have you ever went to gether roses, tiest tell you'd got a handful, an' you'd be startin' to come away, when away up on top o' the vine you'd see one that was encugh pinker an' sweeter'n the rest to

a little higher'n the others? "I see you know what I mean. Weil, that was the way May Day looked that night. She was that top bud.

Meredith, she jest topped 'em all for beauty and sweetness an' modesty that night.
"An' the stranger-well, I donno jest what to liken him to, less'n it is to one of them princes that stalk around the stage an' give orders when they have play actin'

his rig, nor his manners, neither. Talked to the old ladies-ricollect my wife she had a finger wropped up, an' he ast her about it and advised her to look after it an' give her a recipe for bone-felon. She thought they wasn't nobody like him. An' he jest simply danced the wall flowers dizzy, give the fiddlers money, an'-well, he done ev-erything thet a person o' the royal family of city gentry might be expected to do. An' everybody wondered what mo' Mrs. Meredith wanted for her daughter. Tell the truth, some mistrusted, an' 'lowed thet she jest took on that way to hide how

tickled she was. "Well, ez I say, the party passed off lovely, an' after a while it came near 12 o'clcck, an' the folks commenced to look round for ol' Proph to come in an' call out

fetched him in-drawin' him 'long by the sleeve, an' he holdin' back like ez ef he "I tell you, parson, I'll never forgit the way that old nigger looked, longest day I

Seemed like he couldn't sca'cely

walk, an' he stumbled, an' when he took nis station front o' the mantel shelf, seem ed like he never would open his mouth to begin. "An' when at last he started to talk, stid o' runnin' on an' laughin' an' pleggin' everybody like he always done, he lifted up his face an' raised up his hands, same ez you'd do ef you was startin' to read in

low down in his th'oat you couldn't sca'cely hear him-sez he: "'Every year, my friends, I stand befo' you sn' look throo de open gate into the new year. An', sez he, seem like I see a some cryin', some laughin', some stumblin

body called him 'Jeremy, the prophet,' an' from that it got down to 'Prophet' and then 'Proph'—and so it stayed.

"Well, as I started to say, Proph' he was jest one o' Meredith's ol' slave niggers—a sort o' quare, half luney, no 'count darky and the count darky down nothin' near the church bell an' the organ, I can't make out the stay is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to see clair, 'cause the sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to sez he sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to sez he sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez I can, I don't seem to sez he sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez look ez he sky is darkened,' sez he, 'but, look hard ez look ez he sky is darkened,' sez he s nuthin' plain, 'cause the sky is overshaddered by a big dark cloud. An' now,' sez he, 'seem like the cloud is takin' the shape of a great big bird. Now I see him spread his wings an' fly into Simpkinsville, an' while he hangs over it is the sky seem to while he hangs over it in the sky, seem to me I can see everybody stop an' gaze up an' hold their breath to see where he'll light—everybody hopin' td'see him light in their tree him see him their tree. An' now-oh! now I see him comin' down, down, down—an' now he's done lit,' says he. I recollect that expres-sion o' his, 'he's done lit,' sez he, 'in the limb of a tall maginolia tree a little piece

"Well, sir, when he come to the bird lightin' in a maginolia tree, a little piece out o' town, I tell you, parson, you could a'heerd a pin drop. You see, maginolias is purty sca'ce in Simpkinsville. Plenty o' them growin' round the edge o' the woods, but 'ceptin' them thet Sonny Simpkins set out in his yard years ago, I don't know of any nearer than Meredith's place. An' right at his gate, ef you ever takin' notice, there's a maginolia tree purty night extall examples of the woods, but 'ceptin' them is a post only and the edge of the woods, but 'ceptin' them is a maginolia tree purty night examples of the woods, but 'ceptin' them the sonny Simpkins set out in the woods, but 'ceptin' them thet Sonny Simpkins set out in his yard years ago, I don't know of any nearest party ago, I don't know of any nearest ez tall ez a post oak.

"An' so when the ol' nigger got to where the fine bird lit in the maginolia tree, all them that had the best manners, they set still, but sech ez didn't keer-an' I was one of thet last sort-why we jest glanced at he city feller di-rec' to see how he was takin' it.

"But, sir, it didn't ruffle one of his feathers, not a one.
"An' then the nigger he went on: Sez he, squintin' his eyes agin, an' seemin' to

strain his sight, sez he:
"'Now he's lit,' sez he—I wish I could give it to you in his language, but I never could talk nigger talk—'now he's lit,' sez He'd predic' babies a year ahead—not always callin' out full names, but jest insinuatin' so that anybody that wasn't deef in both ears would understand.

he, 'an'. I got a good chance to study him,' sez he. 'I see he ain't the same bird he lcoked to be, 'fo' he lit.

"'His wing feathers is mighty fine, an'

they rise in gorgeous plumes, but they can't hide his claws,' sez he, 'an' when I look closer, sez he, 'I see he got ow eyes an' a sharp beak, but seem like no body can't see 'em. They all so dazzled with his wing feathers they can't see his

nigger in at the end, too, ef he didn't think hisself above it. A ol' harmless, half-crazy nigger, thet's been movin' 'round amongst us all for years, is ez much missed ez anybody else when he drops out, nobody knows how. I miss Proph' jest the same ez I miss thet ol' struck-by-lightnin' sycamo' tree thet Jedge Towns has had cut out of the co't house yard. My mother had my gran'pa's picture framed out o' sycamo' balls, gethered out o' that tree forty year

ago. "But you see I'm makin' every excuse to keep from goin' on with the story, an' ef it's got to be told, well-

"Whether somebody told the Merediths about the nigger's prophecy, an' they got excited over it, an' forbid the city feller the house, I don't know, but he never was seen goin' there after that night, though he stayed in town right along for two weeks, at the end of which time he disappeared from the face o' the earth, an' she along with him.

"An' that's all the story, parson. That's three year ago lackin' two weeks, an' nobody ain't seen or heard o' May Day Meredith from that day to this. "Of co'se girls have run away with men, an' it turned out all right—but they wasn't

married men. Nobody s'picioned he was married tell it was all over, an' Harry Conway he found it out in St. Louis, an' it's been found to be true. An' there's a man living in Texarkana thet testified thet he was called in to witness what he b'lieved to be a genuine weddin', where the preacher claimed to come from Little Rock, an' he married May Day to that man, standin' in the blue cashmere dress she run away in. She was married by the 'Piscopal prayer book, too, which is the only thing I felt real hard against May Day for consentin' to—she being well raised, a hard-shell Baptist.
"But o' co'se the man thet could git

a girl to run away with him could easy get her to change her religion."
"Hold up there, Dan'!!" interrupted old man Taylor. "Hold on there! Not always! It's a good many years sense my ol' woman run away to marry me, out she was a Methodist, an' Methodist she's turned away to marry me, out she was a Methodist, an' Methodist she's turned the code." me, though I've been dipped, thank God!"
"Well, of co'se, there's exception. An' I didn't compare you to the man I'm a-talk-in' about, nohow. Besides Methodist an' 'Piscopal are two different things." returned McMonigle.



"WELL, SIR, I LOANED IT TO THE OLD NIGGER."

rise up, sez he, 'an' fly three times round the tree an' now I see him swoop down right befo' the people's eyes, an' befo' they know it, he's riz up in the air ag-in, an' spread his wirgs, an' the sky seems so darkened that I can't see nothin' claironly a long stream o' yaller hair floatin' behind him.

"'Now I see everybody's heads drop, an' I hear 'em cryin'-but,' sez he, 'they ain't cryin' about the thief bird, but they cryin' about the yaller hair-the yal-ler hair-the yaller hair. "Ain't that about yore riccollection o' how he expressed it?" said McMonigle,

said McMonigle, pausing now in his recital. "Yas," said old man Taylor, "he said it I riccolect that ez long ez I live-an' the third time he said 'the yaller hair' he let his arms fall down at his side, an' he sort o' staggered back'ards, an' turned round to Johnnie Burk an' sez he: 'Help me out, please, sir, I feels dizzy. Do you riccolect how he said that, Dan'l? "But you're tellin' the story. Don't lem-

me interrupt you."
"No interruption, Pete. You go on an tell it the way you riccolect it. I see my pipe has gone out while I've been talkin'. Tell the truth, I'm most sorry that you all started me on this story tonight. It gives me a spell o' the blues-talkin' it over. "Pass me them tongs back here, doctor, an' lemme git another coal for my pipe. An' while I've got 'em I'll shake up this fire a little. This stove's ez dull-

eyed and pouty ez any other woman ef she's neglected. "Hungry, too, ain't you, old lady? Don't like wet wood, neither. Sets her teeth on edge. Jest listen at "his quar'l while I lay it in her mouth.

"Go on, now, Pete, an' tell the parson the rest o' the story. 'Tain't no more'n right thet a shepherd should know all the ins and outs o' his flock ef he's goin' to take care o' their needs.
"You better finish it, Dan'l," said Taylor. "You've brought it all back a heap better'n

could a-done it." "Tell the truth, boys, I've got it down to where I hate to go on," replied McMonigle, with feeling. "I've talked about the child now till I can seem to see her little, slim figure comin' down the plank walk the way I've seen her a hundred times, when all the fellers settin' out in front o' the sto'es would slip in an' git their coats on, an' come back-I've done it myself, an' me a grandfather."

'Go on, Pete, an' finish it up. I've got the taste o' tobacco smoke now, an' pipe is like the stove. Ef I neglect her she pouts.
"I left off where ol' Proph' finished proph-

esyin' at the old year party at my house three year ago. I forgot to tell you, parson, thet Mrs. Meredith, she never come to the party-an' Meredith hisself, he only come and stayed a few minutes, an' went home count o' the ol' lady bein' by herself -so they wasn't neither one there when the ol' nigger spoke. An' ef they'd ever teen told what he said I don't knowthough we have got a half dozen smarties in town, thet would 'a' busted long ago ef they hadn't 'a' told it I don't doubt,

"Go on, now, Pete, an' finish. After Proph' had got done talkin' of co'se hand shakin' commenced, an' everybody was supposed to shake hands with everybody else. I recken, parson, there knows about thatbut you might tell it, anyhow."

"Of co'se, parson, he knows about the nandshakin'," said Taylor, taking up the story, "because you was here last year, parson. You know that it's the custom in Simpkinsville, at the old year party, for everybody to shake hands at 12 o'clock at the comin' in of the new year. It's been our custom time out o' mind. Folks thet'll have some fallin' out an' maybe not be speakin' 'll come forward an' shake hands an' make up-start the new year with a clean slate.

"Why, ef 'twasn't for that, I donno what we'd do. Some of our folks is so techy an' high strung—an' so many o' em kin, which makes it that much worse—thet ef 'twasn't for the New Year handshakin' why, in a few years we'd be ez bad ez a deaf and dumb asylum. "But to tell the story. I declare, Dan'l,

I ain't no hand to tell a thing so ez to bring it befo' yo' eyes like you can. I'm feerd you'll have to carry it on."

And so old man McMonigle, after affectionately drawing a few puffs from his pipe, laid it on the fender before him, and

took up the tale. "Well," he began as usual, "I reckon thot rightly speakin' this is about the end of the first chapter. "The handshakin' passed off friendly

enough, everbody jinin' in, though there was women that 'lowed that they had the cold shivers when they shuck the city feller's hand, half expectin' to tackle a birdclaw. An' I know thet wife an' me-although understand, parson, we none o' us suspicioned no harm—we was glad when the party broke up, an everybody was gone-the nigger's words seemed to ring in

"Well, sir, the second chapter o' the story I reckon it could be told in half a dozen words, though I s'pose it holds misery enough to make a book. "I never would read a book thet didn't end right; in fact, I don't think the law ought to allow sech to be printed. We get

erough wrong endin's in life, an' the only

self ez usual. "Well, sir, I stopped my horse, an' called

'Like ez not he 'lowed he could git some "Like ez not. Well, sir, after I had give

'count o' his pistol bein' sort o' out o' order. 'Lowed thet he took sech a notion to hunt with his pistol that twasn't ne fun shootin' at long range, but somehow couldn't depend on his pistol shootin' straight.

standin' there, an' commenced showin' it



give a quick turn, fired all on a sudden up into a tree, an' befo' I could git my breath, down dropped a squir'l right at his feet. Never see sech shootin' in my life. An' he wasn't no mo' excited over it than nothin'. Jest picked up the squir'l ez unconcerned ez you please, an', sez he: 'Yas, she done it that time-but she don't always do it. Con't depend on her.'
"Then, somehow, he brought it round to ask me ef I wouldn't loand him my revolver. Jest to try it an' see if he wouldn't have better luck. 'Lowed that wouldn't have better luck. 'Lowed that he'd fetch it back quick ez he got done with it. "Well, sir, o' co'se I loaned it to the

ol' nigger-an' took his-then an' I give it to him loaded, all six barrels, 'n', has ever laid eyes on ol' Prophet from that

off som'ers an' shot hisself accidentally— an' never was found. Them revolvers is mighty resky weepons ef a person ain't got experience with 'em.
"So that's all the story, parson. Three days after May Day went he disappeared, an' of co'se he's livin' along at Meredith's

all these years, an' being so 'tached to May Day, and prophesying about her like he done, you can see how one name brings up another. So when I think about one I em to see the other.' "Didn't Harry Conway say he see

Conway. "One o' Harry's cock an' bull stories," answered McMonigle. "He might o' saw some ol' nigger o' Proph's build, but how would that old nigger git there?—anybody s common sense would tell him better'n that.

the parson asked. "Oh, yas, he's been searched for. We've got up two parties an' rode out clair into the swamp lands twic't-but there wasn't no sign of him. "But May Day-nobody has ever went after her, of co'se. She left purty well es-

corted, an' ef her own folks never follered her, 'twasn't nobody else's business. Her mother ain't never mentioned her name sense she left-to nobody." "Yas," interrupted the doctor, "an' some

"They keep a-sendin' for me to see her. but I can't do her no good. She's failed tur'ble last six months. "Ef somethin' could jest come upon her

sent for the Simpkinsville folks to come out in a body—
"Ef he'd allow it, an' the folks would be



obliged to be polite to 'em; she couldn't refuse to meet all her friends for the midnight handshakin', an' it might be the savin' o' her. Three years has passed. There's no reason why one trouble should bring another. We've all had our share o' trials this year, an' I reckon every one o' us here has paid for a tombstone in three years, an' I believe ef we'd all meet together an'

go in a body out there—
"Ef you say so, I'll ride out an' talk it over with Meredith. What's your opinion, "My folks will join you heartily, I'm

sure," replied the parson, warmly. "They did expect to have the crowd over at Bradfield's tonight, but I know they'll be ready to give in to the Merediths." And this is how it came about that the Merediths' house, closed for three years, opened its doors again. If innocent curiosity and love of fun had

carried many to the New Year handshak-ing three years before, a more serious in-terest, not unmixed with curiosity still, swelled the party tonight. It was a mile out of town. The night was stormy, the roads were heavy and most of the wagons without cover, but the festive spirit is impervious to weather the

world over, and there were umbrellas in Simpkinsville, and overcoats and "tarpaulins.' Everybody went. Even certain persons who had not previously been able to mas-ter their personal animosities sufficiently to resolve to present themselves for the midnight handshaking, and had decided to nurse their grievances for another year.

prompaly decided to bury their little hatchets, and join the party.

To storm the citadel of sorrow, whether the issue should prove a victory for besiegers or besieged, was no slight lure to a propole where the state of the st people whose excitements were few, and whose interests were limited to the personal happenings of their small community.
It is a crime in the provincial code social to excuse oneself from a guest. To deny a full and cordial reception to all the town would be to ostracise oneself forever, not only from its society, but from all its sym-

pathies. The weak-hearted hostess rallied all her failing energies for the emergency. And there was no lack of friendliness in her pale old face as she greeted her most unwel-come guests with extended hands.

If her thin cheeks flushed faintly as her neighbors' happy daughters passed before her in game or dance, her solicitous observers, not suspecting the pain at her heart, whispered: "Mis' Meredith is chirpin' up a'ready. She looks a heap better 'n when we come in." So little did they understand.

If mirth and numbers be a test, the old year party at the Merediths' was assuredly me in hand to make up for lost time. I want to

tonight who had declared that they knew they would burst out crying as soon as who laughed the loudest. they entered that house were the ones "Spinning the plate," "dumb-crambo,"
"pillow," "how, when and where," such
were the innocent games that composed the

simple diversions of the evening, varied by music by the village string band and oc casional songs from the girls, all to end with a "Virginia break-down" just before 12 o'clock, when the handshaking fun should commence. It seemed a very merry party, and yet, in speaking of it afterward, there were many who declared that it was the saddest

evening they had ever spent in their lives. Some even affirming that they had been "obliged to set up an' giggle the livelong time to keep from cryin' every time they looked at Mis' Meredith." Whether this were true, or only seemed

to be true in the light of subsequent events, it would be hard to say. Certain it was, however, that the note that rose above the storm and floated out the lighted windows was a note of joyous merrymaking. Such was the note that greeted a certain slowly moving wagon, whose heavily clogged wheels turned into the Merediths' gate near midnight. The belated guest was evidently one entirely familiar with the premises, for, notwithstanding the darkness of the night, the ponderous wheels turned accurately into the curve beyond the magnolia tree, moved slowly, but surely along the drive up to the door, and stopped with hesitation exactly opposite the "landing," well-nigh invisible tonight.

After the ending of the final dance, during the very last moments of the closing year, there was always at the old year party an interval of silence. old men held their watches in their hands, and the young people spoke in

It was this last waiting interval that in years past the old man Prophet had filled with portent, even though, until his last prophecy, his words had been lightly spoken. As the crowds sat waiting tonight watch-

ing the hands of the old clock that seemed | bad smell indeed. It is the wrappers that almost to have stopped, so slow was their movement, listening to the never hurrying tick-tack of the long pendulum against the wall, it is probable that memory, quicken-ed by circumstances and environment, supplied to every mind present a picture of the old man, as he had often stood before them.

A careful turn of the front door latch. so slight a click as to be scarcely discernible, came at this moment, as the clank of a sledge-hammer, turning all heads with a common impulse toward the slowly opening door, into which limped a tall, muffled figure, that seemed to the startled eyes of the company to reach quite to the ceiling. Those sitting near the door started back in terror at the apparition, and all were

on their feet in a moment. But having entered, the figure stood still just within the door. And before there was time for action or question, even, a bundle of old wraps had fallen and the old man Prophet, bearing in his arms a goldenhaired cherub of about two years, stood in

the presence of the company.

The revulsion of feeling, indescribable by words, was quickly told by fast-flowing tears. Looking upon the old man and the child, every one present read a new chapter in the home tragedy, and wept in its presence. Coming from the dark night into the

light, the old man could not for a moment discern the faces he knew, and when the little one, shrinking from the glare, her face in his hair, it was as if time had turned back, so perfect a restoration was the picture of a familiar one of the old days. No word had yet been spoken, and the ticking of the great clock and the crackling fire mingled with sobs were the only sounds that broke the stillness, when the old man, having gotten his bearings, walked directly up to old Mrs. Meredith and laid the child in her arms. Then, losing no time, but, pointing to the clock that was slowly nearing the hour, he said, in a voice tremulous with emotion: "De time is most here. Is you all ready to shek hands? Ef you is-everybody-turn round and come with me."

As he spoke, he turned back to the still open door, and before those who had followed had taken in his full meaning, he had drawn into the room a slim, shrinking figure, and little May Day Meredith, pale, frightened and weather-beaten, stood before them. If it was her own father who was first

to grasp her hand, and if he carried her in his arms to her mother, it was that the "Yas," said the doctor, "jest exactly that-a-way, Dan'l. Go on, ole man. You're a-tellin it straight."

"Well, that's what I'm aimin' to do." He laid his pipe down on the stove's fender as he resumed his recital.

"Old Proph-which his name wasn't Prophet, of co'se, which ain't to say a name used to go by name o' Jerry; then some."

"But tonight," sez he 'I don't know it at the doctor, "jest exactly that-a-way, Dan'l. Go on, ole man. You're a-tellin it straight."

"An' rish here, parson, he left off for a minute, an' then when he commenced again he dropped his voice clair down into his th'oat, an' he squinted his eyes an' seemed to be tryin' to see somethin' way nohow, but his name was Jeremy, an' he used to go by name o' Jerry; then some."

"But tonight," sez he 'I don't know exit to his first claim, and that fallin' to rise no mo', some faces I know, some straigers, in my opinion, is to ketch up all sech stories an' work 'em over.

"Ef somethin' could jest come upon her fallin' to rise no mo', some have to go down an' the house would down an' she have to go different their hear different to his first claim, and that fallin' to rise no mo', some faces I know, some straiger.

"Ef somethin' is to say a mame fall way any some upon her fallin' to rise no mo', some faces I know, some straiger.

"Ef somethin' is to say a larger.

"Ef somethin' is to say a mame fall way and affectionate greatings to surden rest deferred to his first claim, and that came later in their proper order. The striking of the great clock now, mingled with the sound of joy and of weeping—the congratulations, handshaking and words of praise fervently uttered—made a scene ever to be held dear in the annals of Simpkins.

DR. SHADE'S DISCOVERY For Consumption Investigation Produces Perminent Curas.

"The Times" Has Undertaken a Responsibility Which Proves to Be

a Blessing to Mankind.

The Times undertook, in September last, to in-

From the Washington Times.

vestigate the ability of Dr. Shade, 1232 Fourteenth street, a specialist in lung and throat diseases. who had announced that he had made a discovery for consumption called the "mineral treatment," We have interviewed eighteen persons already, who declare they have been cured by him. Several of the number are physicians, who have practiced medicine for years; others are business men, professional and Congressmen. But of all the cases interviewed none, possibly, go farther to prove Dr. Shade's ability to cure consumption than the case of W. Sandford Brown, 1408 Corcoran street. Mr. Brown was treated for more than a year by one of the most celebrated lung specialists in this country, who told Mr. Brown's family and numerous other friends that he was in the last stages of consumption and could not possibly recover. His physician sent him away, noping a change of climate might possibly prolong his life. He came home to die. the last ray of hope having well-nigh fied, when some friend sent him the Medical World, a journal which contained an article written by Dr. N. B. Shade, on his discovery. This inspired fresh hope, and Mr. Brown placed himself under the skill of Dr. Shade, and, as all his friends say, escaped a premature grave. The following will explain the result of taking the mineral treatment for consump-

The Times man found Mr. Brown busily engaged at the store of George E. Kennedy, 1116 Connecticut avenue. As soon as he was at leisure he very, courteously gave the following information:

"I first learned of Dr. Shade through an article that appeared in a medical journal which had in some manner found its way-to my room in a ountry house in Virginia, where I had been sent by Dr. Dan Hagner, under whose treatment I had been for nearly a year, and who had sent me out into the country to rest and seemingly to die. Dr. Hagner was an old practitioner, skilled in lung and throat troubles. He had worked very hard on my case, without beneficial result, and had finally told my wife that ''twas no use,' I would have to die; that nothing on earth could save me. I personally did not have much hope. My mother and sister had both died of consumption, and I had fallen in weight from 173 pounds to less than 100. My legs and arms were swollen and I was scarcely able to drag one leg after the other. Notwithstanding all this, while there's life there's hope, and I determined to call upon Dr. Shade, as I was much impressed by the article which I had read. I at that time was in the last stages of consumption, and it was not without some misgivings that I undertook the journey. I, however, finally reached Washington and immediately called upon Dr. Shade, who did not offer great encouragement, but told me that if I would follow his instructions and bear patiently with him all might be well. This was in April, 1892. For the first three months I did not show much improvement, but after that my coughing grew less and I grew stronger and better from day to day until February, 1893, when I was discharged from the doctor's care as perfectly cured; weight, 165 pounds. You see, I am in evidence today, and can do as good if not a better day's work then ever before. In fact, I've got to, for it stands Human emotions swing as pendulums say finally that I consider Dr. Shade's cure a were not given all the publicity possible. The Times is certainly doing suffering humanity a good turn in drawing public attention to him and his

ment. Then putting into his hands a small "Much obliged for de loan o' de nistol, Marse Dan'l. Hold her keerful, caze she's

one barrel. I ain't never fired her but

"Have you smoked any of Bings' new

some English nobleman, I understand, but to ordinary plebian nostrils it has a very are so very stunning. There is quite a fad at present among the New swells to have their cigarettes made to order. They are provided with mouth-pieces of heavy gilded paper and below that appear the initials and crest of the owner, also in gold. Thus the effect of a box of them is really quite gorgeous. Each man, too, has his own mixture which he affects, and the manufacturers charge them rather fancy prices for them. The fashion was set by some of the foreign noblemen who are familiar figures at the uptown hotels this winter. I advise you to ask Bings for one of his treasures the next time you se

First Letter Carriers. From the Postal Record.

It is not clear that the letter carriers were regularly employed before 1753, when tradition tells us that Benjamin Franklin. the new Postmaster General, employed them in Philadelphia, and possibly in New York. The earliest evidence I have is of 1762, when the Philadelphia postmaster advertised that his "boy" had run away. and that patrons must call for their letters at the post office. The Postal Journal of Hugh Finlay, a storehouse of sound inter carrier in 1773. Of New York he says that "soon after the arrival of a mail the letters are quickly delivered by a runner,"



a yaller cloud into a big, open, blue place where there wuz nothin' but dolls-blondes, bluenettes, niggers, an Chinese; and Santa

"Pity it hadn't a skerrt him into temperance," remarked the man opposite. "Did sober him up for purty nigh two the fellers the wink, an' when Pete hollered he ast him what was the matter, an' of co'se Pete he pointed to the hen that was kitin' through the sto'e that minute, squawkin' for dear life, an' all bedaubled over with egg, an' sez he: 'What sort o' dash blanketed hens hev you got round here, settin' in stoves? And Rowton he looks round and winks at the boys. 'Hen,' sez he, 'what hen? Any o' you fellers seen a hen anywhere round here?" "Of co'se every feller swo'e he hadn't saw no hen, an' Rowton he went up to Pete and he sez, sez he: 'Pete,' says he, 'you better go home an' lay down. You ain't well." "Well, sir, Pete wasn't seen on the streets for up'ards o' three weeks after that. enough story.
"But ez to the old nigger, Proph', being "Yas, that stove has seen sights and heard secrets, too, I don't doubt.

"They say that nigger, Prophet, used to set down an' talk to her same as ef she was a person, some nights, when he'd have her all to hisself. Rowton ast him one day what made him do it, and he lowed that he could converse with anything that had the breath of life in it. There is no accountin' for what notions a nigger'll take." "No, an' there's no tellin' how much or how little they know, neither. Old Proph,' half blind and foolish, limpin' round in the

rightly speakin', an' yet he has called out prophecies that have come true—even befo' prophesied about May Meredith goin' "Here comes Brother Squires, chawin' to-bacco like a sinner. I do love a preacher

woods, gatherin' queer roots, and talkin' to

that'll chaw tobacco.

"BUT I DO KNOW HER FATE," SAID THE PARSON. flect the pitiful face of one of its fair daughters. I don't know the story of May Meredith-or is it May Day Meredith?"

> son resumed, "but I do know her fate. And perhaps that is enough to know. "The other name you called was 'Old Proph,' or 'Prophet.' Tell me about him. Who was he? How was he connected with May Day Meredith?"

another for an answer, which was slow "Go on an' tell it, Dan'l," said the doctor, finally, with an inclination of the head toward McMonigle. Old man McMonigle shook the tobacco from his pipe, and refilled it slowly, with-cut a word. Then he as deliberately lit it, puffed its fires to the glowing point,

nore'n names. "Of co'se we couldn't put it quite ez elo-



Meredith dropped out o' Simpkinsville the sky ain't never shone the same.
"But for a story? Well, I don't see thet ther's much story to it, and to them thet didn't know her I reckon it's a common

mixed up in it, I can't eggsac'ly say that's so, though I don't never think about the old nigger without seemin' to see little May Day's long yaller curls, an's ef I think about her, I seem to see the old man, somehow. "Don't they come to you all that-a-

that-a-way, Dan'l. Go on, ole man. You're a-tellin it straight."

ez they'd walk, an' gittin' up ag'in, some fallin' to rise no mo', some faces I know, some strangers.'

"She was born May day and christened that-a-way," answered McMonigle. "But she was jest ez often called Daisy or May-

any rame thet'd fit a spring day or a flower would fit her."
"Well, I don't know her story," the par-

He paused and looked from one face to it, you'd stick it in the top of yore bouquet

and took it from his lips as he began. "Well, parson," McMonigle began at last, "ef I had o' seen you standin' in the front o' the sto'e clean to the minute you come back here, I'd think you'd heerd

He Saw May Going to Church.

way?"

He paused, took a few puffs from his pipe and looked from one to another for horseback, some muleback, some afoot confirmation of his story.
"Yas," said the doctor, "jest exactly

stand and talk to anything, a dog, a cat, a tree, a toad-frog—anything. Heap o' times I've seen him limpin' up the road an' he'd turn round sudden an' seemed to be talkin' to somethin' that was followin' him, an' when he'd git tired he'd start on an' maybe every minute look back over his shoulder and laugh. They was only one thing Proph was, to say, good for. Proph was a capital Al hunter—shorest shot in

sort o' quare, half luney, no 'count darky -never done nothin' sense feedom but

what he had a mind to, jest livin' on Mere-

"he wasn't to say crazy, but-well, he'd

the state, in my opinion, and when he'd take a notion he could go out where no"Well, sir, body wouldn't sight a bird or a squir'l all day long, an' he'd fill his game bag. "Well, sir, the children round town, they was all afreed of 'im, and the niggers th'ain't a nigger in the county thet don't b'lieve to this day that Proph would cunjer

'em ef he'd git mad.
"An' time he takin' to fortune-tellin', the school child'en thet'd be feerd to go up to him by theirselves, they'd go in a crowd, an' he'd call out fortunes to 'em, an' they'd give him biscuits out o' their lunch cans. 'From that he come to tellin' anybody's fortune, an' so the young men, they got

him to come to the old year party one year, jest for the fun of it, an' time the clock was most on the twelve strike, Proph he stood up an' called out e-vents of the comin' year. An', sir, for a crack-brained, fool nigger, he'd call out the smartest things you ever hear. Every year for five year Proph called out comin' e-vents at the old year party; an' matches that nobody suspicioned, why he'd call 'em out, an', shore enough, 'fore the year was out, the weddin's would come off. An' babies!

"But to come back to the story of May Meredith-he ain't in it, no ways in par-ticilar. It's only thet sense she could walk an' hold the ol' man's hand he doted on her, an' she was jest ez wropped up in him. Many a time when she was a toddler he's rode into town, muleback, with her settin' up in front of him. An' then when the queen to him-that's all. He saved her drowndin' onc't, jumped in the creek after har an couldn't swim a stroke, an' mos' drownded bisself-an' time she had the diptheria, he never shet his eyes ez long ez she was sick enough to be set with—set on the flo' by her bed all night.

"That's all the way Proph is mixed up in her story. An' now, sense they're both gone, ef you 'magine you see one, you seem to see the other. "An' May Day's story? Well, I hardly fike to disturb it. Don't rightly know how to tell it, nohow.
"I don't doubt folks has told you she went

wrong, but that's a mighty hard way to tell the story of May Meredith. "We can't none of us deny, I reckon, thet she went wrong. A red-cheeked peach thet don't know nothin' but the dew and the sun, and to grow sweet and purty-it goes wrong when it's wrenched off the stem and et by a hog. That's one way o' goin'

rong.
'Little Daisy Meredith didn't have no

mo' idee o' harm than that mockin' bird o' Rowton's in its cage there, thet sings weekday songs all Sunday nights. "She wasn't but jest barely turned seven teen years-ez sweet a little girl ez ever taught a Baptist Sunday school class-when he come down from St. Louisthough some says he come from Chicago an' some says Canada-lookin' after some St. Louis land mortgages. An', givin' the devil his due, he was the handsomest man thet ever trod Simpkinsville streets-that is, of co'se, for a outsider. Seen May Day first time on her way to church, an' looked after her—then squared back di-rect, an' followed her. Walked into church of librate, an' behaved like a gentleman, re-

ligiously inclined, ef ever a well-dressed eity person behaved that way.
"Well, sir, from that day on he froze to her, and, strange to say, every mother of a marriageable daughter in town was jealous exceptin' one, an' that one was May's own mother. An' she not only wasn't jeal-

shabby, but of co'se the little girl, she made it up to him in politeness, good as she could, an' he didn't take no notice of it. Kep' on showin' the old lady every 'tention, an' when he'd be in town, most any evenin' you'd go past the Meredith gate you could see his horse tied there-

"Well, sir, he happened to se here the time of the old year party, three year ago. You've been here a year and over, ain't you, parson?" "Yes; I was stationed here at fall conference a year ago this November, you recollect."
"Yas; so you was. Well, all this is about

everything open and above board, so it

Day's city beau was goin' to be here for the party, everybody looked to see some fun, 'cause they know'd how free ol' Proph' made with names, an' they wondered ef he'd have gall enough to call out May Day's name with the city feller's. Well, ez luck would have it, the party was at my house that year, an' I tell you, sir, folks thet hadn't set up to see the old year out for ten years come that night jest for

fear they'd miss somethin'. But of co'se through it. We knowed what when they got settled in years, but the girls there that night was ez perfec' a

bunch of girls ez you ever see-jest cz pureach one seemin' to be the purmake you climb for it, an' when you'd git

"I had three nieces and wife and she had sev'al cousins, there—all purty enough to draw hummin' birds—but I say little Daisy

in a show tent. "They wasn't no flies on his shape, nor

e-vents same as he always done.
"So d'rectly the boys they went out an'

public prayer. An' then he commenced: "Sez he-an' when he started he spoke so

"But tellin' my story-or at least sense I've done told the story, I'll tell parson all I know about the old nigger, Proph', which is mighty little.
"It was just three days after May Mere dith run away thet I was ridin' through the woods twixt here an' Clay Bank, an' who did I run against but old Proph'-walkin' along in the brush talkin' to his-

him up an' talked to him, an' tried to draw him out—ast him how come he to prophesy the way he done, an' how he knowed what was comin', but, sir, I couldn't get no satisfaction out o' him—not a bit. He lowed thet he only spoke ez it was given him to speak, an' the only thing he seemed he ast me to say it for him over an' over-he repeatin' it after me. An' then he ast me to write it for him, an' he put the paper I wrote it on in his hat. He didn't know B from a bull's foot, but I s'pose he thought maybe if he put it in his hat it might strike in."

body to read it out to him," suggested the him the paper he commenced to talk about huntin'-had a bunch o' birds in his hands then, an' give 'em to me, 'lowin' all the time he hadn't had much luck late-

"Took it out o' his pocket while he was



Into Which Limped a Tall, Muffled

Figure. While we was standin' there talkin' he

sir, would you believe it? No livin' day to this.
"I'm mighty feered he's wandered way

ol' man in St. Louis onc't an' thet he let en he didn't know him-wouldn't answer when he called him Proph?" said old man

No, he's dead—no doubt about that."
"I suppose no one has ever looked for the

has accused her o' hardheartedness, but when I see a woman's head turn from black to white in three months' time, like hers done, I don't say her heart's hard: I sav it's broke.

willin' to go out there tonight for the old year party-take their fiddles an' cakes an' things along, an' surprise her-she'd be

I Ain't Never Fired Her but Onc't."

friends recognized as too sacred for their eves and hurried, weeping, away. It was when the memorable, sad, joyous party was over, and all the guests were departing, that Prophet, following old man McMonigle out, called him aside for a mo-

wonderful cure for consumption."

object, he said in a tremulous voice: loaded des de way you loaded her-all 'cept

onc't.

FASHIONS IN CIGARETTES. New York Swells Have Them Made to Order and Gilded.

cigarettes? You look surprised at the question, and, indeed, it is not much like Bings usually to offer to treat to even so inexpensive a luxury as that. Ordinarily he would be much more likely to ask if you had a spare cigar in your pocket, but since he came back from New York he has been so proud of his cigarettes that he is offer-

ing them to everybody he meets." "What is so remarkable about them?" asked one of the men who were in the game, as he chalked his cue and prepared to knock the balls in a manner to excite the wrath and envy of his opponents. "Is the tobacco some special importation or is it some unusually artistic mixture?"

"As for the mixture, it is that favored by

formation, tells us that Boston had no letwhich means messenger or letter carrier.

A Holiday Dream.



Chorus-"Oh, what a shame! Didn't yer